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INTRODUCTION TO THE RABBINIC BIBLE:

BY

JACOB BEN CHAJIM.

TRANSLATED FROM THE RABBINICAL HEBREW, WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES, BY

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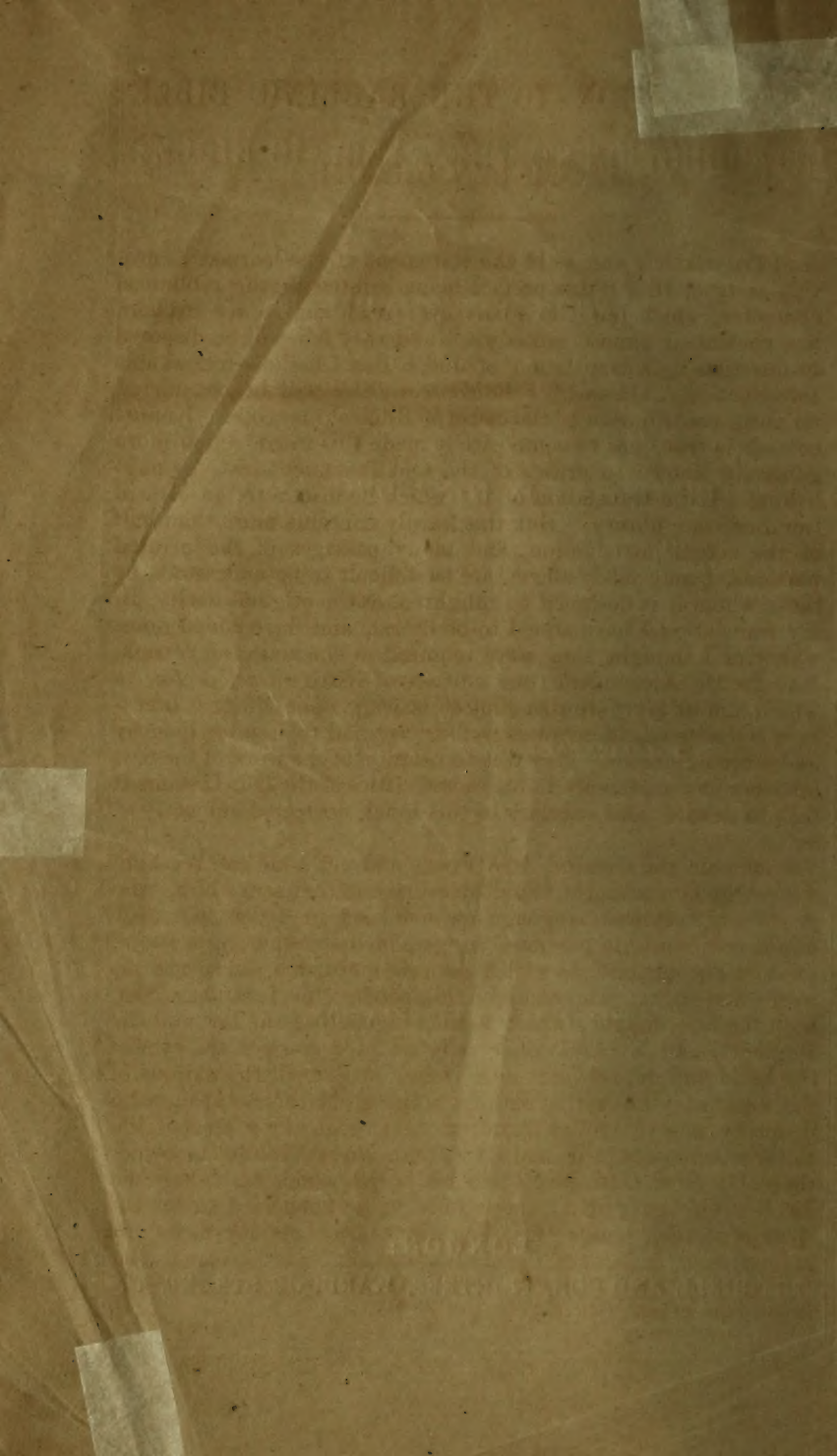
*Reprinted from "THE JOURNAL OF SACRED LITERATURE AND
BIBLICAL RECORD," for July, 1863.*

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LONDON:

MITCHELL AND SON, PRINTERS, WARDOUR STREET, W.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE RABBINIC BIBLE:

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Div. S.

JACOB BEN CHAJIM.

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[*Translator's note.*—If the statement of the learned Kennicott is true, that “this preface being printed in the rabbinical character, which few Christians ever read, and fewer explain, has continued almost unknown,” and very few will be disposed to question it, a translation of Jacob Ben Chajim’s remarkable *Introduction to Bomberg’s Rabbinical Bible* will be considered no mean contribution to the cause of Biblical literature. Kennicott, it is true, has to some extent made this introduction more generally known to critics of the Old Testament text, by publishing a Latin translation of it,^a which he discovered in MS. in the Bodleian library. But this hardly contains more than half of the actual introduction, and many passages of the printed portions, I may safely affirm, are as difficult to be understood by those whom it is designed to enlighten, as the original itself. In my translation I have aimed to be literal, and have added notes wherever I thought they were required to elucidate the version. But for Dr. Alexander’s new edition of Kitto’s *Cyclopædia*, in which almost every Jewish subject bearing upon Biblical literature is discussed, these notes would have had to be more lengthy and more numerous. May this translation of the work of the first labourer at the Massora induce some critics of the Old Testament text to devote their energies to this much neglected subject.]

PRASED be the Creator, who exists and yet none can see him, who is hidden and yet found by every one that seeks him, who graciously bestowed language on mankind in order that they might communicate precious things joined together by wisdom, so as to become one, to gather his rain and flame, and learn his words and ways. He endowed his people, his first-born Son, with the holy tongue, which is the language of the law and the Prophets, and is very wonderfully adapted to open the eyes of the blind and impart light unto them, so that all the nations of the world may know that there is nothing like this holy language in purity of style and charm of diction; it is like a tree of life to those who possess it, and its wisdom imparts life to the owner thereof. Now God gave it to his people whom he had chosen for himself—gave it to them only to be concealed under the shadow of their hands; for they alone know its mysteries, its

^a *The State of the printed Hebrew Text of the Old Testament considered.* Dissertation the second. Oxford, 1769. p. 229—244.

grammar, its rules and its intricacies. And the men of the Great Synagogue, in whom was heavenly light, bright and powerful, like pure gold, on whose heart every statute of the law was engraved, have set up marks, and built a wall around it, and made ditches between the walls, and bars, and gates, to preserve the citadel in its splendour and brightness; and they all came to its transparent cloud, and burning doctrine, and rising incense; and they sanctified themselves to take the fire from off its altar so that no other hand might touch it and desecrate it, so as to become a bat for every fool; they strung together its golden words from columns of the word of God,—words of purity; and the spirit alighted upon them, and as if by prophecy they wrote down their labours in books, to which nothing is to be added. The princes of the people gathered together to hear their sublime words; and when they had finished their work, the supernatural vision and its source were sealed, and the glory and splendour departed, and the angel of the Lord appeared no more. For no one rose after them who could do as they did. And now we are here this day gathering the gleanings which they have left; and we capture the faint ones of their rear-guard, and run in their path day and night, and toil, but can never come up to them.

II. Thus says the writer. I was dwelling quietly in my house and flourishing in my abode, prosecuting diligently my studies at Tunis, which is on the borders of ancient Carthage, when time removed me to the West, but did not withdraw its hand from afflicting me, and afterwards brought me to the famous city of Venice. And even here I had nothing to do, for the hand of time was still lifted up, and exalted over me; and its troubles and cares found me in the city, smote me, wounded me, and crushed me. And after about three months of sufferings, I left for a little while the furnace of my afflictions, for I was in a thirsty land. I said in the thoughts of my heart, I will arise now and walk about the streets of the city. As I was walking in the streets, wandering quietly, behold God (through the exertions of an Israelite of the name of R. Chajim Alton, son of R. Moses Alton, who bestowed great kindness upon me—the Lord preserve and keep him)—sent a highly distinguished and pious Christian of the name of Daniel Bomberg to meet me, the Lord keep him and preserve his mind. He brought me to his printing-office and shewed me through his establishment, saying to me, Turn in, abide with me, for here thou shalt find rest for thy soul and balm for thy wound, as I want you to revise the books which I print, correct the mistakes, purify the style, and examine the works till they are as refined silver and as purified gold.

III. Although I saw that his desire was greater than my ability, yet I thought that we must not refuse a superior. Still I told him that I did not know as much, nor nearly as much [as he supposed] in accordance with what we find at the end of chap. ii. of *Jerusalem Maccoth*. "A man who knows only one book when he is in a place where he is respected for knowing two books, is in duty bound to say, I only know one book." And as I have no great intellect, how could I, being so low and insignificant, undertake such great things from which, peradventure, mischief might ensue, seeing that R. Ishmael had already exhorted a scribe in his days, "My son take great care how thou doest thy work, for thy work is the work of heaven, lest thou drop or add a letter and thereby wilt be a destroyer of the whole world" (comp. *Sota*, 20 a, and in other places), which is still more applicable to the present time, when the distinction between the oral and written law has ceased, as both are now written down, and a mistake may describe the right wrong, and the wrong right. Therefore, I felt that I must not rely upon my own judgment, but examine two or three codices and follow them wherever they agree, and if they do not agree I must chose from among the readings those which appear to me unobjectionable, and sift them till I am convinced that they are correct and clear, especially as Rashbam^b and Rashba^c have already consulted in their theological decisions not to make emendations upon mere conjectures.

IV. And it came to pass after I had remained there for some time, doing my work, the work of heaven, the Lord, blessed be his name, stirred up the spirit of the gentleman for whom I worked, and encouraged his heart to publish the twenty-four sacred books. Whereupon he said to me, Gird up thy loins now like a man, for I want to publish the twenty-four sacred books, provided they contain the commentaries, the Targums, the major and minor Massora,^d the *Keri* without the *Kethiv*, and the *Kethiv* without the *Keri*,^e *plene* and *defective*, and all the glosses of the

^b *Rashbam* רש"ם is a contraction of the initials of רבי שמואל בן מיייר, *Rabbi Samuel ben Meier*, grandson of Rashi and a very excellent commentator of the Bible, born about A.D. 1085, and died about 1155. Comp. Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, s. v., *Rashbam*.

^c *Rashba* רשב"א is the acrostic of רבי שלמה בן אברהם, *Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham ben Adereth*, a celebrated Talmudist and Kabbalist who was born at Barcelona, about A.D. 1235 and died 1310.

^d A full description of the Rabbinic Bible will be found in Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, under the article "Jacob B. Chajim."

^e For an explanation of *Keri* without *Kethiv*, and *Kethiv* without *Keri*, see below, sections VI., XIX., note.

scribes, with appendices containing the major Massora according to the alphabetical order of *the Aruch*,^f so that the reader may easily find what he wants. Like a bear bereft of its young ones he hastened to this work, for he loved the daughter of Jacob. He summoned the workmen who were skilled in printing, and each one with his tools in his hand at once betook himself to the work. Seeing then that the work was urgent, and that it would redound to the glory of Israel, inasmuch as it will shew the nations and princes the beauty and excellence of our holy law, for since it was committed to writing nothing has appeared like it; and seeing, moreover, that its excellency was magnified in the eyes of the publishers, becoming as it were the chief corner-stone with him, I set my face to the fulfilling of his desire.

V. And now since many of the people, and among them are even some of the different classes of our learned contemporaries, who in their heart value neither Massora nor any of the methods of the Massora, say, What profit can be derived from the Massora? and for this reason it has almost been forgotten and lost, therefore I shook my lap (or bestirred myself), as this afforded me the opportunity to do the work of the Lord, to shew the nations and the princes the value of the Massora; for without it none of the sacred books, and particularly the Pentateuch, can be written with propriety and correctness.

VI. We purpose in the first place to reply to, and refute, some of the later great sages of blessed memory, who were nearer our time, and who maintained that *the Keri* and *the Kethiv* originated as follows. During the Babylonian captivity when the sacred books were lost and scattered about, and those wise men who were skilled in the Scriptures were dead, the men of the great synagogue found different readings in the sacred books; and in every place where they met with a doubtful and perplexing case they wrote down a word in the text, but did not put the vowels to it, or wrote it in the margin and left it out in the text, not being sure what they found. Thus for their words. But I am far from adopting their opinion, as I shall shew in the sequel, and refute them from the Talmud.

^f *The Aruch* (ערך) is the celebrated Rabbinic and Aramaic Lexicon of R. Nathan B. Yechiel, which was finished about A.D. 1101, 1102. It was first published sometime before 1480 in square letters, in Pisauri 1517, then in Venice 1531, by Bomberg, in beautiful square letters, and several times since. The best edition, however, is that of Landau, in five volumes, Prague, 1819—1824. Etheridge's description of the time when this Lexicon was finished, as well as his remarks about the *editio princeps* (*Jerusalem and Tiberius*, Longmans, 1856, pp. 284, etc.) are incorrect. Comp. Steinschneider, *Catalogus Libr. Hebr. in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, col. 2040—2043. Zunz, *Notes on Asher's Edition of the Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, London, 1841, vol. ii., p. 18.

VII. I shall, secondly, notice the differences which in many places exist between our Talmud and the Massorites, and everywhere side with the latter, and state what we have learned from them.

VIII. I shall, thirdly, refute the heretics who dared to accuse us of wilfully altering and changing passages in our holy law, as in the case of the eighteen emendations of the scribes, *the Tikun Sopherim, the Itur Sopherim, the Keri, and the Kethiv*,^g and the order of the language.

IX. I shall, fourthly, explain the order which I have adopted, both in the minor and major Massora, to facilitate the reader.

X. Let me then, firstly, do battle with the sages of blessed memory, who lived nearer our time, for they spoke unseemly against our holy law, saying that *the Keri* and *the Kethiv* exhibit the doubts which the men of the great synagogue entertained. And these are their names and these their words.

XI. The Ephodi^h in chap vii. of his grammar writes as follows, "Ezra the priest, who was the most accomplished and the chief of the scribes, bestirred himself, and exerted all his powers to rectify what was wrong, and in like manner acted all the scribes who followed him. They corrected all the sacred books as much as possible, in consequence of which they have been preserved to us perfect in the commandments, the chapters, the verses, the words, letters, plene, defective, the abnormal and normal phrases and the like, and for this reason are denominated scribes. To this effect they have also composed treatises which are the books of the Massora, and made *the Keri* and *Kethiv*, in every passage in which they met with some obliterations and confusion, not being sure what the precise reading was." Thus far are his words.

XII. But what surprises me still more is, that so holy a man as Kimchiⁱ should also utter similar things in his introduction to the earlier prophets. The following is his language, "It appears that these words (*i. e., the Keri and Kethiv*) originated because the sacred books were lost and scattered about during the Babylonian captivity, and the sages who were skilled in the

^g For an explanation of these terms, see below, § XIX., XXVII., XLIII.

^h *Ephodi* אפי=אפי is a contraction of the initials of אפי פרופית דורן *I Prophiat Duran*, the signature of the celebrated polemical writer against Christianity, who was called *Isaac ben Moses Ha-Lavi*, and flourished A.D. 1391—1403. For particulars of this writer see Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, s.v. *Prophiat Duran*.

ⁱ The Kimchi here referred to is *David Kimchi*, also called *Redak* רד"ק (born A.D. 1160, died about 1235), who wrote commentaries on nearly the whole of the Old Testament, the famous Hebrew Grammar called *מכליל*, and the Lexicon entitled *ידושרים* and who may be regarded as the teacher of Hebrew of both Jews and Christians throughout Europe.

Scriptures were dead. Whereupon the men of the great synagogue, who restored the law to its former state, found different readings in the books, and adopted those which the majority of copies had, because they, according to their opinion, exhibited the true readings. In some places they wrote down one word in the text but did not punctuate it, or noted it in the margin but omitted it from the text, whilst in other places they inserted one reading in the margin and another in the text." Thus far is his language.

XIII. Don Isaac Abravanel,^j the memory of the righteous be blessed, refutes them in his introduction to Jeremiah in this manner, and these are his words:—"The opinion wherein all these wise men agree, and their conclusions, are far from being mine. For how can I believe with my heart, and speak with my lips, that Ezra the scribe found the book of the law of God, and the books of his holy prophets, in an unsettled state through obliterations and confusions? Is not the scroll of the law in which one letter is omitted illegal? How much more must it be so through *the Keri* and *the Kethiv*, which are found in the law, since, according to *the Keri*, many letters are wanting in the law, etc.?"

XIV. Again he says, and these are his words, "Behold, I ask these men if, according to their prevailing opinion, *the Keri* and *the Kethiv* originated because they [Ezra and his associates] found various readings, and Ezra was not sure which was the right one, put down both readings, one in the margin and the other in the text, if it be so, why should we, in explaining the Scriptures, always follow the *Keri* and not *the Kethiv*? And why should Ezra, who was himself doubtful, always put the points in accordance with *the Keri*, and not with *the Kethiv*? And if he meant [to give preference to *the Keri*] he ought to have inserted *the Keri* in the text, as it is the true one and agrees with the points, and put *the Kethiv* in the margin because he did not approve of it.

XV. "Moreover, if the obliterations and confusion to which the books were subject in consequence of the captivity gave rise to it [*i. e.*, *the Keri* and *the Kethiv*], it ought to occur accidentally in the passage which happened to be obliterated, or in which [a doubtful reading] was found. Whereas thou wilt find in the law of God in the section לך לך,^k that *the Kethiv* is מלך צביו

^j Abravanel, or Abarbanel, the famous statesman, philosopher, theologian, and commentator of Spain, was born in Lisbon in 1437, and died at Venice in 1508. For a list of his works on Biblical literature, see Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, s.v. Abravanel.

^k This is the name of one of the Sabbatic lessons, comprising Gen. xii. 1—

and the *Keri* is מֶלֶךְ צְבָאִים, and the same thing occurs a second time. Now could this obliteration or confusion always occur in this word? The same is the case with all, *e. g.* נִעְרָה, which is written twenty-two times נָעַר, and occurs only once as plene in Deut. xxii. 19; so also בַּעֲפֻלִּים, which is always the *Keri*, and the *Kethiv* is טַחְוִירִים, and the *Keri* יִשְׁגְּלֶנָה, whilst the *Kethiv* is always יִשְׁכַּבְנָה. It is evident, therefore, that the thing is not as these sages thought, and may the Lord forgive them!"

XVI. Abravanel, therefore, submits that the true account of the matter is as follows:—"Ezra the scribe and his associates found the books of the law entire and perfect, but before betaking himself to make the vowel points, the accents and the division of verses, he examined the text, when he found words which, according to the genius of the language and the design of the narrative, appeared to him strange. Hence he concluded that this must have originated from one of the two causes. Either the writer, according to the degree of inspiration vouchsafed unto him, conveyed by these anomalous expressions some of the mysteries of the law, and therefore, he [Ezra] did not venture to expunge anything from the sacred books. Having thus perceived that it was written by the highest wisdom, and that there was one reason or another why the words were sometimes defective or plene, and why the phrases were anomalous, he left them in the text as they were written, and put the *Keri* in the margin, which simply explains the said anomaly in accordance with the genius of the language, and the design of the narrative; and of this nature are all the *Keris* and the *Kethivs* in the Pentateuch. In like manner when Ezra found the word בַּעֲפֻלִּים which denotes *heights*, and which conveys no meaning to us, he put in the margin the word טַחְוִירִים *emerods*; and this is also the case with the word יִשְׁגְּלֶנָה, the root of

xvii. 27. According to an ancient custom, the Jews to the present day divide the Pentateuch into *fifty-four* sections, to provide a lesson for each Sabbath of those years which, according to the Jewish chronology, have fifty-four Sabbaths, and thus read through the whole book of the law (תּוֹרָה) in the course of every year. Each of these Sabbathic sections or *sidra* (סִדְרָא), as it is called by the Jews, has a special name which it derives from the first or second word with which it commences; and Jewish writers, when they quote a passage from the Pentateuch, instead of saying it occurs in such and such a chapter and verse, give, as in the instance before us, the name of the Sabbathic section, because this practice obtained prior to the division of the Bible into chapters and verses. A full description of these Sabbathic lessons, as well as of the manners and customs connected therewith, is given in Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, art. "Haphtara."

which (שגל) is used with regard to a queen; he therefore put in the margin ישכנה. Or, secondly, Ezra may have been of opinion that these anomalous letters and words were owing to the carelessness of the sacred speaker or writer; and this carelessness on the part of the prophet was like an error which proceeded from a prince. Ezra had, therefore, to explain such words in harmony with the connexion, and this is the origin of *the Keri* which is found in the margin, as this holy scribe feared to touch the words which were spoken or written by the Holy Ghost. These remarks he made on his own account in order that he might explain such letters and words, and on that account put them in the margin to indicate that this gloss is his own. And there can be no doubt that they [*i. e.*, Ezra and his associates] received the text in such a state from the prophets, and the sages who have preceded them. Hence if you examine the numerous *Keris* and *Kethivs* which occur in Jeremiah, and look into their connexion, you will find that all of them are of this nature, viz., that Jeremiah wrote them through mistakes and carelessness, etc. Abravanel has a great deal more upon this subject in his introduction to Jeremiah: "Hitherto [he says further on] we have shewn that *the Keri* with *the Kethiv*, and *the Keri* without the *Kethiv*, are simply explanations. This is also the nature of *the Kethiv* without *the Keri*. When Ezra saw that words were put down which have no meaning, according to the simple sense of the words, he did not point them to indicate thereby that they are not to be read. From this you learn that the books, in which there are many such instances, shew that the speaker or writer was deficient in the manner of speaking, or in his knowledge of orthography. Hence you find in Jeremiah alone eighty-one *Keris* and *Kethivs*, and in the books of Samuel, which Jeremiah wrote, the number of *Keris* and *Kethivs* rises to one hundred and thirty-three; . . . whilst in the Pentateuch, which proceeded from the mouth of the Lord, though it is four times as large as the book of Jeremiah, there are comparatively few, only sixty-five *Keris* and *Kethivs*." Thus far his words. He, in like manner, counts how many *Keris* and *Kethivs* occur in every book of the Bible, in order to shew which of the prophets was more conversant with the laws of the language. But all his decisions upon this subject are far from my notions, as I shall presently shew in refuting him.

XVII. The strictures, however, which he made upon Kimchi and Ephodi are good and apposite, and I shall also refute these men in my refutations of Abravanel's decisions, since both his decisions and the opinions of Kimchi and Ephodi are mere conjectures, whereas we rely solely upon the Talmud, which we

acknowledge; for the heart of its sages was as large as the door of the temple: they are truth, and their words are truth.

XVIII. Now I submit that Don Abravanel is perfectly right in saying that Ezra the scribe, and his associates, found the books of the law entire and perfect just as they were originally written.

XIX. But what he says in his first hypothesis, beginning with the words, "Either the writer, according to the degree of inspiration vouchsafed unto him, conveyed by these anomalous expressions some of the mysteries of the law," etc., till "he put *the Keri* in the margin, which simply explains the said anomaly in accordance with the genius of the language" [compare § XVI.], all this is not correct. For in the Talmud we learn most distinctly, "R. Ika b. Abaja said in the name of R. Hannaël, who repeated it in the name of Rab, What is meant by ויקראו בספר תורת אלהים מפורש ושום שכל ויבינו במקרא [Neh. viii. 8] ? [Reply]. The words "they read in book in the Law of God," mean the Hebrew text, the expression מפורש denotes the Targum, ושום שכל the division of the verses, whilst ויבינו במקרא signifies, according to some, the dividing accents (פסקי טעמים), and according to others the Massora. R. Isaac said, the pronunciation of certain words according to the scribes (מקרא סופרים), the emendations of the scribes (עטור סופרים), *the Keri* without *the Kethiv* (קריין ולא כתיבן), and *the Kethiv* without *the Keri* (כתיבן ולא קריין) are laws of Moses from Mount Sinai. The *Mikra Sophirim* (מקרא סופרים) shews how to read מצרים, שמים, ארץ,¹ the *Itur Sophirim* (עטור סופרים) is shewn in אחר תעבורו [Gen. xviii. 5], אחר תלך [Josh. ii. 16], אחר תאסף [Numb. xii. 14], צדקתך כהררי אל [Ps. lxviii. 26], קדמו שרים אחר נוגנים

¹ That is to say, since there were no vowel points to indicate when it was pronounced אָרֶץ and when אֶרֶץ (in pause); or to shew that מִצְרַיִם and מִצְרַיִם have simply dual forms without being duals; the Sopherim pointed out how these and many other words are to be read.

^m There is a difference of opinion as to what is meant by עֵטוּר סוֹפְרִים and the examples here adduced to illustrate it. According to Rashi on this passage it denotes the idiomatic construction fixed by the Sopherim, which necessitates the writing of אחר תעבורו and not תעבורו אחר, and is called עֵטוּר because it is an improvement of or ornament to the style; according to others, this ornament of style (עֵטוּר סוֹפְרִים) consists in using the word אחר at all, since it is superfluous in all these instances given in the Talmud, as we could very well say, קדמו שרים ונוגנים, whilst according to *the Aruch*, as given

are written indecent expressions, decent expressions are read in their stead, *e. g.*, ישכבנה instead of ישגלנה [Deut. xxviii. 30; Isa. xiii. 16; Jer. iii. 2; Zech. xiv. 2]'; מחורים instead of עפולים [Deut. xxviii. 27; 1 Sam. v. 6, 9, 12; vi. 4, 5, 17]; דביונים instead of חריונים [2 Kings vii. 25; xviii. 27; Isa. xxxvi. 12]; חוריהם instead of צואתם [2 Kings xviii. 27; Isa. xxxvi. 12]; מימי שיניהם instead of מימי רגליהם [2 Kings xviii. 27; Isa. xxxvi. 12]; למחראות instead of למוצאות [2 Kings x. 27, compare Megilla 25 *b*].” And Rashi of blessed memory submits that the expression ישגלנה is used for the cohabitation of dogs, as it is written in Nehemiah [ii. 6], where שגל is used in this sense. *The Aruch* too explains it in like manner under the words דביון, whereas ישכבנה denotes the cohabitation of people who are legally married. Hence we see that it is not as Abravanel maintains; that מחורים did not originate from our ignorance of the word עפולים, and that שגל is not used in connexion with a queen. Compare *Rosh Ha-Shana*, 4 *a*.

XXIII. I am not going to reply to the words of Abravanel in his second hypothesis, viz., “that the anomalous expressions are owing to the deficiency of the writer in his knowledge of Hebrew or orthography,” for I am amazed that such a thing should have proceeded from a man like him of blessed memory. How can any one entertain such an idea in his mind, that the prophets were deficient in such matters? If it really were so, then Abravanel of blessed memory had a greater knowledge of Hebrew than they; and for the life of me I cannot believe this. And if they really did inadvertently commit an error, as Abravanel insinuates, how is it that the prophet or the inspired speaker did not correct it himself? Is it possible that eighty-one errors should occur in the Book of Jeremiah, and one hundred and thirty-three in the Book of Samuel, which Abravanel himself has counted, and has shewn was written by Jeremiah? Can we entertain the idea that a prophet, of whom it is said, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” [Jer. i. 5], should have fallen into such errors? In conclusion, it appears that Abravanel of blessed memory had not seen the Talmud on this subject; for according to the Talmud there is neither light nor any glimpse of light in what he submits. It may, however, be that the Don of blessed memory entertained this strange opinion, not because he was unacquainted with the Talmud, but because

he followed in this respect the steps of the great Rabbi, Rambam^o of blessed memory (*More Nebochim*), to shew his ability to account for it without the Talmud.

XXI. If an objector would urge, "Behold we do not find in the Talmud any more *Keris* and *Kethivs*, *Kethivs without Keris*, *Itur Sopherim*, etc., besides those enumerated above, whereas the Massora gives those and a great many others, I am therefore compelled to tell thee, that in the last-mentioned cases we are obliged to account for them in the manner of Abrahanel of blessed memory; since I believe that all those which are mentioned in the Talmud are a law of Moses from Mount Sinai, but not the others."

XXV. Now though it is true that the Massora does indeed count all those which are mentioned in the Tract Sopherim, and a great many more, yet this presents no insurmountable difficulty. For we learn in the Mishna Sopherim, vi. 4, "R. Simon b. Lakish says three codices [of the Pentateuch] were found in the court of the temple, one of which read מעון, another זעטוי, and the third היה. In the one case it was written מעון אלהי קדם [Deut. xxxiii. 27], and in the other two מעונה, the reading of the two was therefore declared valid, whereas that of the one invalid. In one copy again, ואל זעטוי בני ישראל was found [in Ex. xxiv. 11], and in the other two ואל אצילי: the reading of the two was declared valid, and that of the one invalid."^p Now if there be any foundation in what Don Abrahanel said, that the reason why Ezra did not venture to omit anything from the books of God is, that he considered them to be written by divine wisdom, this cannot escape one of the two alternatives. Either Ezra knew that they were all a law of Moses from Mount Sinai, or that they were doubtful readings, as Kimchi and Ephodi maintained. And if you say that he did know whether they were a law of Moses from Sinai, why did he not expunge the reading of the one copy, and adopt that of the majority of codices, seeing that in the case of the three codices found in the court of the temple, they followed the majority of copies? But you will perhaps say that the MSS. were equally divided, and that he could therefore omit nothing, but was obliged to put the *Keri* in the margin. Then let such an one shew me how it

^o *Rambam* רמב"ם, is a contraction of the initials of ר' משה בן מימון *R. Moses ben Maimon* also called *Maimonides*, one of the most extraordinary Jews who lived since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. He was born March 30th, 1135, in Cordova, and died December 13th, 1204.

^p The whole of this passage in the Talmud is elaborately discussed by Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzung der Bibel*. Breslau, 1857. pp. 232—244.

is possible to read the Pentateuch, when [according to the Talmud] we must not read a single letter which is not written in the text. How can it enter into one's mind that we should read *the Keri* which Ezra the scribe put down to explain the anomalous text, and leave out the textual reading which was written by the finger of God? We are therefore bound to believe that all of them are a law of Moses from Sinai. Now the same question was put to Rashba of blessed memory, "How can we read *בחורים* instead of *בעפולים*, and *ישכבנה* instead of *ישגלנה*, which are not in the text?" When Rashba of blessed memory answered as follows:—

XXVI. "As regards thy question, 'Seeing that in reading the law one must not change even a single letter; how can the Prefector read *ישכבנה* when the text has *ישגלנה*, or substitute another reading in any other passage for what is in the text, seeing that all *the Kethivs* in the law are according to the *Mas-sora*, and not according to *the Keri*?'"

XXVII. "The answer is, that it is a law of Moses from Sinai, as it is written in Tract Nedarim [37 *b*], 'the pronunciation of certain words according to the scribes (*מקרא סופרים*), the emendations of the scribes (*עטור סופרים*), *the Kethivs* without *the Keri*, and *the Keri* without *the Kethivs*, etc., are all a law of Moses from Sinai.'" From this it is evident that the interrogator did not know that it was a law, since Rashba informed him that it was so; and now seeing that it is a law of Moses from Sinai, there can be no more any question about it. See moreover that even Rashba of blessed memory supported himself therein on the above quotation from Nedarim, in spite of there being a great many more *Keris* and *Kethivs* than those enumerated in the Talmud, as already stated before. If these were doubtful readings, why were they not enumerated with the three doubtful readings in *Sopherim* [vi. 4]? Seeing then that there are no more than these, it is evident that the others were not doubtful, for if they were doubtful they [the *Sopherim*] would in these, as in the former instances, have followed the majority of MSS., and not have put them in the margin, as we have stated above.

XXVIII. There is then no more difficulty. As to Don Abravanel's remark, "there is no doubt that they [*i.e.*, Ezra and his associates] have received it [*i.e.*, *the Keri*] from the prophets and the sages of bygone days." To this I reply, choose one of the two positions. If you say that they have received it from the prophets and sages of bygone days, then this cannot escape one of the two alternatives. Either it [*the Keri*] was a

law of Moses from Sinai, and they [the prophets and sages] told him [Ezra] that it [*the Keri*] ought to be so, or they did not tell him that such and such readings were a law of Moses from Sinai. If they have not told him that such and such a reading is a law of Moses from Sinai, then he clearly knew it already that it [the marginal reading] ought to be so [in the correct one], since it was received so from the prophets. And if it be so, what then does Abravanel mean by saying that the sacred scribe was afraid to touch any of the words which were spoken by the Holy Ghost? Moreover there is another objection [to be urged]. If it be so that they have received it so from the prophets and sages of bygone days, why have not the prophets and sages themselves corrected it? We are therefore bound to conclude that *the Keri* and *the Kethiv* are both a law of Moses from Sinai, as we have proved above from the Talmud [Nedarim 37 b.]

XXIX. As to what Abravanel said in his first hypothesis, "that the writer, according to the degree of inspiration vouchsafed unto him, conveyed by these anomalous expressions some of the mysteries of the law, and therefore Ezra did not venture to expunge from the sacred books," this is certainly true, as the great Rabbi Ramban² of blessed memory, the chief of the later Kabbalists, has propounded it in the Introduction to his *Commentary on the Pentateuch* (*vide in loco*). And for this very reason I am all the more astonished at Don Abravanel of blessed memory, how he could afterwards declare that it is a doubtful matter, ascribing in his second hypothesis carelessness to Jeremiah, because of the anomalous expressions in באות נפשו רוח שאלפה [Jerem. ii. 24], *the Keri* in the margin being נפשה fem., as is evident from the usage of the language. Whereas in fact this is one of the mysteries of the law connected with the Levirate law, and the initiated know it.

XXX. Thus we learn from these and similar arguments that *the Keri* without *the Kethiv* and *the Kethiv* without *the Keri*, and all the Massoretic statements, are a law of Moses from Sinai, and not as the afore-mentioned sages propound, which is evident from the Talmud [Nedarim 37 b.] quoted above.

XXXI. We do indeed find in many places that the Talmud

² *Ramban* רמב"ן is the acrostic of משה בן נחמן *Rabbi Moses ben Nachman*, also called *Nachmanides*, and *Nachmani*, and *Moses Girondi*. This distinguished Talmudist, Kabbalist, and commentator, was born about 1195, and died about 1270. His *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, to which allusion is here made, has recently been republished in *The Pentateuch with the Rabbinic Commentaries*. Five vols. 4to. Vienna, 1859. For his other works connected with Biblical literature, see Alexander's Edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, art. *NACHMANIDES*.

differs from the Massora, as we see in Tract Nidda [33 a] where *והנושא אותם* [Levit. iv. 10] is written *והנשא* without the *ו*.

XXXII. Tossafoth^{*} thereupon remarks, "It is strange that the reading of the Massora is plene," and concludes that the Talmud in fact does sometimes differ from the Massora, as we find in Sabbath [55 b] on *the sons of Eli*, where *מעבירים* [1 Sam. ii. 24] is quoted. And this is the remark of the Talmud: [query] "Is not the reading *מעבירים*? Whereupon R. Hannah b. R. Ishmael said the reading is *מעבירם*."

XXXIII. Now Rashi of blessed memory remarks on this passage, "I cannot understand how this sage is here cited, for I am of opinion that the whole passage is spurious, and that he never said it, since the reading of the most trustworthy codices is *מעבירים* plene, and since it is not mentioned in the great Massora, where all the words in which the *ו* is written (כתיב) but not read (קרי), are enumerated and summed up. Besides the whole question is irrelevant, as the meaning of *מעבירים* is not to transgress, but to circulate a report, and this is what Eli said, 'No, my son, it is not a good report which I hear the people of God circulate about you;' *מעבירים* is the plural, and refers to עם יהודה, and not to בני עלי, who were the transgressors themselves, and did not make others to transgress." Thus for his language.

XXXIV. Tossafoth again comments thus upon the passage; and this is its language: "Our Talmud differs from our copies of the Bible, which read *מעבירים*, and we find a similar difference in the Talmud Jerushalmi on Samson, where it has, 'And he judged Israel (ארבעים) forty years;' whereas our copies of the Bible

* *Tossafoth* תוספות denotes those additions or supplementary glosses to Rashi's *Commentary on the Talmud* which are found along with the commentary of Rashi in every edition of the Talmud. The disciples of Rashi finding that the expositions of their master might be extended and improved, set about to continue his work of exposition immediately after his death, filling up every gap, and using up every scrap, which their immortal teacher left. Their reverence for him, however, was so great that they would not put down their opinions in an independent manner, but denominated them תוספות additions, and hence they derived the name *Tossafoths*. The first Tossafoths consisted chiefly of Rashi's own relations, his two sons-in-law, R. Meier b. Samuel and R. Jehudah b. Nathan, called by way of abbreviation Ribam (רבי יהודה בן נתן=ריב"ן), his three grandsons R. Isaac, R. Samuel, and R. Jacob Tam, sons of R. Meier, who are respectively called from their initials Ribam (רבי יצחק בן מאיר=ריב"ם), *Rashbam* (רבי=רשב"ם) and *R. Tam*, and lastly R. Isaac ben Asher of Speier, called *Riba* (רבי יצחק בן אשר=ריב"א), also a relative of Rashi's. Comp. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. vi., Leipzig, 1861, p. 170, and vol. vii., Leipzig, 1863, p. 129, etc.

read (עשרים) *twenty* years [Judges xvi. 31]; hence it seems that the Philistines feared him [*i.e.*, Samson] twenty years after his death.”

XXXV. To me it appears, however, that there is no difficulty in it; for what the Talmud speaks about Samson refers to the Midrashic interpretation, viz., “Why is the verse, that he judged Israel twenty years, repeated twice? R. Acha answered, From this we see that the Philistines feared him [*i.e.*, Samson] twenty years after his death just as they did twenty years before it, and this makes forty years.” Hence the Talmud does not say, Why is it written in the text, “he judged Israel forty years?” but simply “he judged forty years,” that is according to the Midrash. And now everything comes out right when thou lookest into it.

XXXVI. Now I wonder at Rashi, who was versed in the Massora and adopted the Massoretic conclusions, as we have seen in the above quotation from the Tract Sabbath [55 b] on the sons of Eli, where he argues from the Massora against R. Hanna, and concludes that the said passage in the Talmud is spurious—that he should in various places entertain opinions contrary to those of the Massora. Thus, for instance, he writes in his *Commentary on Gen.* xxv. 6, “The reading is פלגשם without the ך, to shew that it was only one concubine, *i.e.*, Hagar, who was identical with Kethora, according to the opinion of *Bereshith Rabba*.” He also remarks on Numbers vii. 1, that the reading is כלת and not כלות; whereas we are most distinctly told in the Massora that פילגשים in Gen. xxv. 6 and in Esther ii. 9, is *plene* in both cases, and the minor Massora tells us that כלות in Numb. vii. 1 is *plene*.

XXXVII. And again Rashi remarks in his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, the reading is מזוהת [Deut. vi. 9] in order to shew that even if a door has only one post, it requires a *mezu-zah*.^s Now I wonder at this, for we find in the Massora that it is written with a ך between the ז and the ת. Rashi, however, adopts the opinion of Rabbi Meier in Menachoth, 34 a, where we learn, “R. Papa happening to call at the house of Bar Samuel saw there a door which had only one post on the left side, and

^s מזוה with the Jews denotes the piece of parchment on which is written Deut. vi. 4—9; xi. 13—21, which they regard as containing the injunction to inscribe on the door-posts the words of the law. This slip of vellum thus written upon is then enclosed in a cylindrical tube of lead, cane, or wood, and to the present day is nailed to the right door-post of every door. A detailed description of this institution is given by Maimonides, *Jod Ha-chezaka*, *Hilchoth Mezuzah*, vol. i., p. 93, etc., ed. Immanuel Athias, Amsterdam, 1702. Joreh Deah, § 285—292; and Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, s. v. MEZUZAH.

yet had a *mezuzah*, and asked, According to whom is this? According to Rabbi Meier [was the reply]. Whereupon it was asked, Where is this remark of Rabbi Meier? [Reply] We find that a house which has a door with only one post, Rabbi Meier says it ought to have a *mezuzah*, but the sages say it ought not. [Query] What is the reason of the sages? [Reply] Because the text has מְזוּזוֹת in the plural [thus shewing that two posts were required. Query.] And what is the reason of Rabbi Meier? [Reply.] For we learn that it is מְזוּזוֹת plural, whence I see that it cannot be less than two; and when מְזוּזוֹת is again mentioned in another verse where it is superfluous, it is to teach us that it is רַבּוּי אַחֵר רַבּוּי; and every רַבּוּי אַחֵר רַבּוּי is designed to diminish [the number of posts] so as to have a *mezuzah*. Thus says Rabbi Ishmael, etc. [upon which Tossafoth remarks] and accordingly it would appear that the reading is מְזוּזוֹת plene with two Vavs, and not defective with one Vav; and this is the remark of Rabbi Ishmael, who says that the text is of paramount importance, *i.e.*, that we must explain it according to the written text just as we find in Sanhedrim, 4 *b*, in the case of טַטְפֹּת. But the fact is that we cannot infer anything from this; since we find Rabbi Akiva, who maintains that the marginal reading is of primary consideration, *i.e.*, that we must be guided by the *Keri* as in the case of טַטְפֹּת, yet he himself admits that text is of paramount importance.”

XXXVIII. Again, in Sabbath, 103 *b*, we find Rabbi Jehudah b. Bethira says:—“The Scriptures used וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם [Numb. xxix. 19] with regard to the second day of the feast of tabernacles, וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם [*ibid.*, verse 31] with regard to the sixth day, and כִּמְשַׁפֵּט [*ibid.*, verse 33] with regard to the seventh day,[†] whence we obtain the final ם [of the first], the י [from the second], and the final ם [from the third word]; and have therein an intimation from the law about the ceremony of pouring out water on this festival. Whereas Rashi, of blessed memory, reads [Succa, 46 *b*] כִּמְשַׁפֵּט in connexion with the eighth day of the festival [*i.e.*, at the end of verse 37], and כִּמְשַׁפֵּט in connexion with the seventh day [*i.e.*, at the end of verse 33].” Now Tossafoth

[†] These words also occur in connexion with the other days of the feast, but without the letters in question; and as, according to the Talmudic laws of exegesis, no superfluous letter is ever used in the Bible without its having a recondite meaning (compare Ginsburg's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. Longman, 1861, p. 30, etc.), these three letters have been combined into מים *water*.

“ The passage must have been altered since the day of the Tossafoth, and made conformable to the present text of the Bible, as in my copy of the Talmud there is no difference between Rashi and the Massoretic text.

criticizes Rashi, and these are the words of Tossafoth: "We read כמשפטם on the seventh day, as is evident from Taamith, 2 *b*, and from the larger Massora, and not as Rashi, who reads it on the eighth day." Thus far the remark of Tossafoth. Moreover, in Menachoth, 34 *b*, Rasbi, of blessed memory, does not animadvert upon the Talmud, which reads differently from the correct codices, as he animadverted in connexion with the sons of Eli [*vide supra*, § XXXIII.], and yet these are the words in Menachoth: "The sages propound, 'Rabbi Ishmael said in לטטפת לטטפת לטטפת, the four compartments [in the phylactery] are indicated.'" Thus far the words of the Talmud. In the correct codices, however, as well as in the book Tagi, the reading is as follows, לטטפת [in Deut. vi. 8; xi. 18] and ולטטפת [Exod. xiii. 16], but there is no ו between the פ and the ת; yet I myself have seen an ancient codex in which Deut. xi. 18 was also written לטטפת, with a ו after the first ט. Still we may rely upon the authors of the Tossafoth, since they saw the book Tagi, and know more thoroughly about *plene* and *defective* than we know. The Tossafoth on Menachoth observes as follows:^u "In Deut. vi. 8 and xi. 18 the reading is לטטפת, and in Exod. xiii. 16 ולטטפת, according to the correct codices, but there is no ו between the פ and ת," and asks, "How then can a dual be made out of it?" If we could apply to it the exegetical rule גורעין ומוסיפין דורשין it would be all right, but we find it only applied to letters at the end and beginning of words, but not in the middle. Thus, for instance, ולקח מדם הפר [Zebachim, 24 *b*], the first מ is taken over from מדם to הפר [making it דם מהפר]; so also in Baba Bathra, 111. In ונתתם את נחלתו לשארו [Numb. xxvii. 11], the ו is taken from the end of נחלתו, and the ל from the beginning of לשארו, and

^u The word טטפת occurs only three times (Exod. xiii. 16; Deut. vi. 8; xi. 18); in two instances it has no ו (Deut. vi. 8; xi. 18), and in the third (Exod. xiii. 16), there is a ו after the first ט, *i. e.*, טוטפת; hence R. Ishmael regards it as a dual, and makes of the three words *four*, to obtain the four compartments in the phylacteries. As the limits of a note do not permit of a detailed description of these compartments, we must refer to Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, art. "Phylacteries," for it.

^v As Jacob ben Chajim has somewhat abbreviated this quotation from Tossafoth, and made it difficult thereby to translate, I have translated the whole of it as found in the Talmud.

made into a separate word לו, *i. e.*, לו שארו לו. To this Rabbi Taam replies, the first ו of ולטוטפת [*i. e.*, the copulative] is taken from the beginning of the word and put between the ת and פ, thus reading לטוטפת, as we find it in *Baba Mezhiah* [54 *b.*] on ויסקף חמישיתו עליו [Lev. xxvii. 27], where the ו is taken from ויסקף, converted into the allied letter י, and put between the ת and ו of חמישיתו, thus reading חמישיתיו. But Tossafoth objects to this explanation on the ground that the Talmud asks further on, "If this can be done, let us apply it also to the things devoted to the sanctuary, where it is written ויסקף חמישית וגו' [Lev. xxvii. 15]?" And the answer is, "Even if you take away the ו from ויסקף, and put it to the end of חמישית, it would only be חמישיתו [making no plural]." But now [if Rabbi Taam's principle of applying this exegetical rule be right] we might put the ו in the middle of the word, so as to obtain חמישיות *plural*. It is therefore evident that we never put the letters except at the end of a word, as is the case with all the instances which I have adduced." Thus for the words of Tossafoth. Rashi, of blessed memory, too quotes the same principle [in his commentary on *Baba Mezhiah*, 54 *b.*], that we only add to the beginning and end of words, but that in the middle the letters must remain as they are, *vide in loco*. And we cannot urge in such a case that we cut up the Scriptures with too sharp a knife, as it is urged in all other places, because it cannot be called cutting except when the words are displaced, as it is remarked there [*i. e.*, in *Baba Bathra*, 111] in connexion with the verse ונתתם את נחלתו [Numb. xxvii. 11] against Rabbi Abja, who wanted to do it, and Rabba said to him, "Thou cuttest the Scriptures with a sharp knife." Thus far his reply.

XXXIX. It appears difficult to me, that when we are distinctly told in the Talmud [*Megilla*, 25 *b.*], "The sages say that all passages which are written in the law in indecent expressions, are rendered decent by *the Keri*, as, for instance, ישכבנה instead of ישגלנה [Deut. xxxviii. 13; Isa. xiii. 16; Jer. iii. 2; Zech. xiv. 2]; טחורים instead of עפולים [Deut. xxviii. 27; 1 Sam. v. 6, 9, 12; vi. 4, 5, 17]; the Massora should only give six instances where *the Kethiv* is עפולים, and *the Keri* טחורים, and omit the one which occurs in 1 Sam. vi. 12; and, indeed, all our best codices do the same. Now I cannot account for

this in any other way except in the manner already stated above, viz., that the Talmud is sometimes at variance with the Massora.

XL. In *Bereshith Rabba*, on **לֹאסֹר שָׂרִי בְנִפְשׁוֹ** [Psalm cv. 22] Rabbi Idai remarks *the Kethiv* is שָׂרִי without a י [*i. e.*, in the singular], and that it refers to Potiphra. Now the difficulty is that we do not find this י omitted in any codex; nor is it mentioned in the large Massora among the number of fifty-six passages where the י is omitted in the text and found in *the Keri*; and there is no way of accounting for this again except as I accounted for the manner of the Talmud, viz., that it differs from the Massora.

XLI. It is very surprising that we find Rashi, of blessed memory, and Saadia Gaon,^{*} giving *Keris* and *Kethivs* which are not to be found in any copies of the Massora. Thus, for instance, Rashi, of blessed memory, in his commentary on **הִרְדָּד עֲמִים תַּחְתִּי** [Psalm cxliv. 2] remarks that in his copy *the Keri* was תַּחְתִּי, and *the Kethiv* תַּחְתִּי, and I carefully looked for it, but could not find it in the great Massora numbered among the eighteen words in which the י is omitted at the end of the word. And this again is the language of Rabbi Saadia Gaon on Daniel xi. 5, “*The Keri* is מִבְּצָרִי and *the Kethiv* מִבְּחָרִי.” Now I carefully examined the Massoretic books in all the places where the letters are changed, but could not find it; and my difficulty is [to understand] how these Gaonim could overlook the Massora, for according to the Massora which we have, their statements are incorrect. However, they [Saadia and Rashi] are much wiser than we who are as it were blind men in a window, compared with them.

XLII. For some time I was in great perplexity; seeing that the ways of the Talmud are different from those of the Massora, as we have shewn above in the instance of plene and defective, according to whom [I asked myself] are we then to write the scrolls of the law, since what is lawful according to the one is unlawful according to the other? At the first thought it would seem that we ought to write our scrolls according to the Talmud, since we have taken it upon ourselves [to follow its authority], and since they [*i. e.*, the authors of the Talmud] were better

^{*} Saadia Gaon (סַדְיָה גֵּאוֹן) ben Joseph Ha-Pithomi, the celebrated philosopher, commentator, and translator of the Bible into Arabic, was born at Fajum, in Upper Egypt, A.D. 892, and died in 942. It is somewhat strange that Jacob ben Chajim should name him *after* Rashi, who lived so much later. The title *Gaon*, which denotes *excellency*, was given to those who were the spiritual heads of the Jewish community.

versed in the Massora, as well as in plene and defective, than we are. Nevertheless, we find that Rashi, of blessed memory, draws objections from the Massora against our Talmud, as in the case of the sons of Eli, and even declares that the statement in the Talmud that *the Kethiv* is מעבירים is a mistake, as we have shewn above [*vide supra*, § XXXIII.]. The authors of the Tossafoth too, raise objections from the Massora against the Talmud, and make the Massora their basis, as will be seen in the sequel from a quotation in *Tract Jebamoth* [*vide infra*, § XLV.]. Now if the Massora were not their basis, they would not have argued from it against the Talmud. But since we see that though they were later than the Talmudists, and yet made the Massora their basis to argue from it against the Talmud, it is evident that we too must act according to the Massora. And, indeed, this is the reason why the codices and the corrections of the scrolls are all according to the Massora; and of a truth the men of the great synagogue [*i. e.*, the authors of the Massora] are of great authority, and fully worthy that we should rely upon them. And though Rashi, as we have seen, sides with Rabbi Meier in the Talmud, in the case of מוורות, against the Massora, taking *the Kethiv* as מוורות, as we have stated above [*vide supra*, § XXXVII.], and in many other cases, yet we also see that in other places he argues from the Massora against the Talmud, as I have shewn in this section.

XLIII. As to the heretics, there is no foundation in the charge which they prefer against us, that we have wilfully altered and changed the Law, which they derive from *the Itur Sopherim* (עטור סופרים), *the Tikun Sopherim* (תיקון סופרים), *Keri* and *Kethiv*, etc., because by *Itur Sopherim* is not meant that they (*i. e.*, the Scribes) have removed the ך, but what is said in the Aruch under עטור; and this is its language: “עטור denotes *removal*, as the Chaldee renders לא סרו [1 Ki. xxii. 44] by לא עטרו; and so we find in Gittim, 86, the nature of the bill of divorce is פטיר ועטיר, *i. e.*, *discharged and separated*. Now it appears that the villagers were at first not particular in reading the Scriptures, and read וסעדו לבכם [Gen. xviii. 5]; קדמו שרים ואחר נוגנים [*ibid.*]; ואחר תעבורו [Ps. lxviii. 24]; צדקתך כהררי אל ומשפטך תהום רבה: they committed blunders at that time, thinking that these were the correct readings because they seemed to be so. Whereupon the Sopherim came and removed these *Vavs*, and the reading became

again *אחר נוגנים, אחר תעבורו*; and when it was seen that the Sopherim had removed these *Vavs*, the words thus corrected were denominated *Itur Sopherim* (עִטּוּר סוֹפְרִים). Rabbi Isaac therefore came and propounded that they (*i. e.*, these restored readings) are those received by Moses on Sinai. And even up to the generations nearer that time they blundered and read *וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ* [Exod. xxxiii. 13] when the Sopherim decreed that it should be read without a *Vav*. Thus far his language.

XLIV. Thus it is evident that they [*i. e.*, the Sopherim] made no wilful changes. But if they [*i. e.*, the heretics] will persist in it in spite of the Gaon [*i. e.*, of what the author of the Aruch says], we can repel them with the power of argument as follows. Can any man believe that if one intends to make wilful alterations and changes he would say, See what wilful changes I have made, especially in the Prophets? Yet we find the language of the Massora is, "Five words are *Itur Sopherim*, etc.; eighteen words are *Tikun Sopherim*." Now if they had intended to make wilful changes, they would surely not have proclaimed what they have changed, and said, "Eighteen words are *Tikun Sopherim*, as given in the *Mechilta*." Moreover, the Sopherim made no changes nor corrections, they only submitted that the text ought originally to have been so and so; but is veiled in other expressions out of respect to *the Shechina*, as you will find out by examining the subject. The same is the case with *the Keri* and *the Kethiv*: they [*i. e.*, the Sopherim] point out what they have altered if you choose to characterize them as alterations; we of the class of believers, however, believe that they all are [the original readings] a law of Moses from Sinai, including *the Tikun Sopherim*. But even if you were still to insist that the Sopherim did make alterations, the alterations in question neither raise nor lower the points upon which the heretics rest. Consult also the history of Ptolemy the king, and you will see that the thirteen instances where they made changes, they state the reason why they have made these alterations, and what these alterations are. In conclusion, the heretics can have nothing to say in this matter.

XLV. But for the men of the Great Synagogue who restored the crown to its ancient state, as it is written, "They read in

* *The Mechilta* מַכְלִילָה is a Midrashic exposition of Exodus xii.—xxiii. 20, attributed to R. Ishmael ben Elisha, who flourished in the first century of the Christian era. For his rules of interpretation and influence on Biblical exegesis see Alexander's edition of Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, s. v. Ishmael ben Elisha.

the law of God," etc. [Nehem. viii. 8], see Nedarim as quoted above [§ XIX.], we should have walked about as blind men, and as those who are smitten with blindness, and could not have found any correct codex, nor any scroll of the Law upon which we could rely. Thus we could not have known whether a word has the ו conjunctive or not but for the Massora, as Tossafoth remarks on this subject in connexion with the Levirate law (Jebamoth, 106 b), where "Rabbi Abaja says the one who sends a letter of divorce must not pause after the לא, and thus read אבה יבמי, since this might convey the idea that he wants to marry her, etc. Now R. Ashai found R. Kahara, who, being perplexed about it, read לא אבה יבמי with ו conjunctive; whereupon the former said to him, Have you not heard what Rabe said upon this subject? R. Kahana answered him, In this case Rabe himself yields."²

XLVI. Tossafoth remarks thereupon, and this is its language, "In the correct codices it is לא אבה without the ו, and this is also evident from the Massora [which says], "לא לא אבה occur together three times, viz., לא אבה יהוה השחיתך [Deut. x. 10]; לא אבה יבמי [ibid. xxv. 7]; and לא ישראל לא לי [Ps. lxxxi. 12]; and in two other passages it commences the verse, and is with the ו conjunctive, viz., ולא אבה סיוחן [Deut. xi. 30]; and ולא אבה לשמע אל בלעם [ibid. xxiii. 6]." It also occurs in two other passages of the same kind, not mentioned in the Massora, viz., in connexion with Saul, ולא אבה נושא כליו [1 Sam. xxxi. 4], and in the case of Jephthah, וגם אל מלך מואב שלח ולא אבה [Judges xi. 17]. Thus far the language of Tossafoth. You can see now that if it had not been for the Massora we should not have known whether to read לא אבה or ולא אבל [in Deut. xi. 30]. But finding in the Massora that לא אבה occurs three times, and that the passage in question is counted among them, it is evident that the reading was not ולא אבה with a ו. Indeed innumerable examples might be adduced which are like it. Again, the Massora enumerates a certain word which is in so many instances preceded by לא, but in none of them by ולא, or vice versa; and

² The allusion to Rabe arises from the circumstance that he laid no weight on a pause. Compare Jebamoth, cvi. 6.

so all the rest. The same is also the case with *ואת* and *את*, as for instance *אך את הזהב ואת הכסף את הנחשת את* [Numb. xxxi. 22], upon which the Massorites remark: "And the sign is *להבא למלכיא* *the gold belongs to the king*," and the meaning is, that this passage ought to be so, for there are two passages which take this *ו* before the second and the last nouns, whilst the remaining ones have no copula, viz., the passage before us and *והחתי והאמורי הכנעני הפרזי החוי והיבوسی* [Joshua ix. 1]. Now the meaning of this [Massoretic sign] is that *להבא*, *the gold*, which indicates the passage beginning with *אך את הזהב* [Numb. xxxi. 22], is similar in construction, and belongs to *ויהי כשמוע כל* *the king*, which indicates the passage *המלכים* [wherewith the verse in Joshua ix. 1 begins]. From this you can see the beautiful and laconic style of the Massorites, for thereby they make known to us how the passage is to be read and written. If it had not been for the Massorites, how could we tell when we find it written *והכנעני והפרזי* whether it is right or wrong? The same is the case with plene and defective, since with us *the Keri* and *Kethiv* are of paramount importance, although there is a dispute as to which of them should be made the basis [in expounding the text], *e.g.*, in Pessachim, 86 *b*, where the question is about *בבית אחד יאכל* [Exod. xii. 46],^a and the similar case in connexion with the feast of tabernacles, where we have *בסכנת בסכנת בסוכות* [Succoth, 6 *b*];^b and many other examples might be

^a As *the Kethiv* is *יאכל* passive, and *the Keri* *יאכל* active, two inferences are deduced therefrom in the Talmud. R. Jehudah maintains that the man who partakes of the passover, *he* must eat it (*יאכל*) in one place (*בבית אחד*), but that the passover itself may be divided, and a part of it may be eaten by another company in another place; basing his argument upon *the Keri* *יאכל* *he must eat it at one place*. Whereas R. Simeon maintains that the passover itself it must be eaten (*יאכל*) in one place (*בבית אחד*), and cannot be divided between two different companies in different places, though the man himself, after having eaten his passover at home, may go to another place and partake of another company's passover; basing his argument upon *the Kethiv* *יאכל*, *it must be eaten in one place*.

^b The word *בסוכות* occurs three times in the Pentateuch (twice in Lev. xxiii. 42, and once in ver. 43); in two cases (Lev. xxiii. 42) it is defective, *i.e.*, without the *ו*, and in the third instance it is plene, *i.e.*, with the *ו*. Now upon the saying of the Rabbins that a tabernacle must have two whole walls, and the third may be a partial one to be a legal tabernacle, R. Simeon remarks that it must have *three* entire walls, and that the fourth may be a partial one, to constitute it a tabernacle according to the law. This difference of opinion the Talmud explains by

adduced on this subject (*vide* Tossafoth on Succa). This also obtains by the marginal readings which are not in the text, *the Kametz and Pattach*, and other things of a similar kind, which alter the sense, and of which there are numerous examples. Again also in the point of the numbers of passages which the Massora gives, saying, "There are three or four or more;" from all this we learn many different laws and explanations. Thus, for instance, when it is said in the Massora on the word *בראשית* that it begins the verse in three verses, and the passages are *בראשית ממלכת יהויקים* [Gen. i. 1]; *בראשית ממלכת צדקיה* [Jerem. xxvii. 1]; and *בראשית ממלכת צדקיה* [*ibid.* xxviii. 1], it throws light upon what is said in the Talmud, where it is declared, "God wanted to reduce the world again to void and emptiness, because of the wicked Jehojakim, but when He looked upon the people of his time, His mind was appeased: God wanted to reduce the world again to void and emptiness, because of the people of Zedekiah's time, but when He looked upon Zedekiah, his mind was appeased" [Erachim, 17 a].^c Again we read in the Massora, "*ויבדל אלהים בין האור*," occurs three times, viz., *ויבדל אלהים בין האור* [Gen. i. 4]; *ויבדל בין המים אשר מתחת לרקיע* [*ibid.* i. 7]; and *ויבדל דוד ושרי הצבה* [1 Chron. xxv. 1]. Now it is said in the Talmud, "Whoso [in the Havdalah]^d mentions the separations [of God] must not mention less than three, and more than

saying that the sages follow the spelling *בסכה, בסכה, בסכה*, which makes *four* (since two are in the singular and one in the plural); one of these four represents the commandment itself, shewing that we must have a *סכה*, and the remaining three indicate the three walls, one of which is allowed by the Halacha to be partial. Whereas R. Simeon follows the pronunciation, which is alike plural in all the three instances, and hence obtains *six*. He then takes one of these three (*i. e.*, of the plurals) to indicate the commandment respecting the feast itself, and the remaining two plurals, being four in number, he refers to the four walls of the *סכה*, one of which may, according to the Halacha, be partial.

^c The Massoretic enumeration of these three passages suggests an explanation of the passage in the Talmud, where Jer. xxvii. 1 and xxviii. 1 are connected with Gen. i. 1, shewing that God wished, in those cases where *בראשית* is used to destroy the work of the first *בראשית*. May not this striking illustration also suggest the design of the Massora in its first origin?

^d *Havdalah* *הבדלה* is the name of the prayer which the Jews to this day offer on Sabbath evening at the going out of the Sabbath and coming in of the week day. The last benediction in this prayer, in which occur the passages referred to in the Talmud, is as follows: *ברוך אתה "אלהינו מלך העולם המבדיל בין קדש לחול בין יום ראשון למנוחה, ברוך אתה "אלהינו מלך העולם המבדיל בין קדש לחול*, *Blessed be the Lord our God, king of the universe, who hast made a distinction between the holy and the common, between light and darkness, between Israel and the other nations, between the seventh day and the other six days of work; blessed be thou, O God, who hast made a distinction between the holy and the common!*

seven. (Query) To say not more than seven is right, because seven separations are instanced, and there are no more; but why should there be not less than three? (Reply) Because **ויבדל** occurs three times; and as the first separation was between the Sabbath and the week days, therefore must the three separations be mentioned at the close of the Sabbath, viz., **בין אור לחשך**, **בין ישראל לעמים** and **בין קדש לחול**, the fourth separation which is mentioned on this occasion, viz., **בין יום השביעי**, **לששת ימי המעשה**, is included in **בין קדש לחול**, and is simply repeated in order to make it agree in sense with the concluding benediction" [*Pessachim*, 103 *b*, 104 *a*]. Again we read in the Massora, "**פתוח** occurs four times, and the passages are **פתוח כלי** [Numb. xix. 15]; **שרשי פתוח אלי** [Psalm v. 10]; **קבר פתוח גרונם** [Job xxix. 19]; and **אשפתו נקבר פתוח** [Jerem. v. 16];" and these four correspond to the four laws or different distinctions which obtain with regard to an earthen vessel, viz., when it has a hole [**פתוח**] through which the water runs into it, the law is that it must not be used for consecrating therein the water of sin-offering, thus answering to **פתוח כלי** [Numb. xix. 15], yet it is still a vessel with respect to the growing of plants. But if the hole is so large that a small root can be put through it, then it is clean for growing therein plants, for when a plant grows in a vessel which has a hole, it is no longer subject to defilement, thus answering to **שרשי פתוח** [Job xxix. 19]; yet it is still a vessel with respect to olives. If the hole, however, is so large that an olive can pass through it, then it is clean [or not subject to defilement], thus answering to **קבר פתוח גרונם** [Ps. v. 10], for what amounts to eating is the size of an olive; yet it is still a vessel with respect to pomegranates. But if the hole is so large that a pomegranate can pass through it, then it is no longer subject to any defilement, and thus answers to **אשפתי פתוח** [Jerem. v. 16], that is to say, when the vessel has a hole through which a pomegranate can pass, it is like a heap of rubbish, for it is no longer regarded as a vessel.^c Many of the Massoretic signs are used for such explanations in cases without number; some of them are dispersed through *the book Mordecai*, and in

^c Things in a vessel are, according to the Talmud, subject to defilement. If the vessel, however, happens to have a hole, then it all depends upon the size of this hole, the definition of which is the subject of discussion. Compare Maimonides, *Iad Ha-Chesaka*, *Hilchoth Kelim*, section xiv., vol. iii., p. 350.

the *Theological Decisions of the Ram.*, where the latter defines what is meant by the word הכוני, which the Massora says occurs twice, viz., הכוני מצעוני [Song of Songs, v. 7], and הכוני בל' חליתי [Prov. xxiii. 35] (by a comparison of these two passages) *vide in loco*. In fact there can be no doubt that whenever the Massorites state the numbers 7 or 4 or 10 or 3, they are designed for some great purpose, and are not useless. All this shews the great sanctity of our holy law, and that the parallels are not without design. Moreover when the Massora makes the remark in Chaldee, there is a reason for it, which will be found upon examination. For this reason I have collected all that I could find of their remarks in the Massoretic books which I possess, collated it and put it in these twenty-four sacred books, arranging everything in its proper place, and repeated it again in the larger Massora, so that it can be easily found. I might have written more largely upon this subject, and shewn the use of all the Massoras, and supported it by proofs, but it would have been too lengthy, and the perusal of it a weariness to the flesh.

XLVII. When I saw the great benefit which is to be derived from the larger Massora, the smaller Massora, and the great Massora, I apprised Mr. Daniel Bomberg of it, and shewed him the advantage of the Massora. Whereupon he did all in his power to send into all the countries in order to search what may be found of the Massora: and, praised be the Lord, we obtained as many of the Massoretic books as could possibly be got. The said gentleman was not backward, and his hand was not closed, nor did he draw back his right hand from producing gold out of his purse to defray the expenses of the books, and of the messengers who were engaged to make search for them in the most remote corners, and in every place where they might possibly be found.

XLVIII. And when I examined these Massoretic books, and mastered their contents, I found them in the utmost disorder and confusion, so much so that there was not a sentence to be found without a blunder, that is to say, the quotations from the Massorites were both incorrect and misplaced; since those copies [of the Bible] in which the Massora was in the margin, it was not arranged according to the order of the verses contained in the page. Thus, for instance, if a page had five or six verses, the first of which began with ויאמר, the second with ויגד, the third with וזה, the fourth with וישלח, the fifth with ותשב, the Massora began with וישלח, the fourth verse (*i. e.*, וישלח כ"ב, the word וישלח occurs twenty-two times); then followed ויגד, the remark on the

second verse (i.e., ויגד כ"ד), and then *the fifth verse* (ותשב ט"ו) without any order or plan; and most of them were written in a contracted form and with ornaments, so much so that they could not at all be deciphered, as the desire of the writer was only to embellish his writing, and not to examine or to understand the sense. And in most of the copies, for instance, there were four lines [of the Massora] on the top of the page and five at the bottom, as the writer would under no circumstances diminish or increase the number. Hence, whenever there happened to be any of the alphabetic Massora, or if the Massoretic remark [belonging to a certain page] was lengthy, he split it up in the middle or at the beginning, and greatly introduced abbreviations so as to obtain even lines. Now when I observed all this confusion I shook my lap [i.e., bestirred myself], in the first place to arrange all the Massoras according to the verses to which they belonged, and then to investigate the Massoretic treatises in my possession, apart from those which were written in the margin of the Bibles. Wherever an omission or contraction occurred [in those copies of the Bible which had the Massora] in order to obtain even lines or four lines [of Massora] at the top [of a page in the Bible] and five at the bottom, I at once consulted the Massoretic treatises, and corrected it according to order: and wherever I found that the Massoretic treatises differed from each other, I put down the opinions of both sides, which will be found in the margin of this Bible published by us, with the Massora, the word in dispute being marked to indicate that it is not the language of the Massora: and whenever I took exception to the statement of a certain Massoretic treatise because its remark did not harmonize with the majority of the copies of the Massora, whilst it agreed with a few, or whenever it contradicted itself, or where there was a mistake, I made a careful search till I discovered the truth according to my humble knowledge; but sometimes I had to leave it in uncertainty, and for this reason there will be found many such in the margin of this Bible which we printed. The Lord alone knows how much labour I bestowed thereon, as those will testify who saw me working at it. As to the revision of the verses, it would have been impossible for me to do it correctly without knowing the whole Scriptures by heart, and this is far from me. But for a certain book called *Concordance*, the author of which is the learned R. Isaac Nathan,^f who lived

^f The exact year in which R. Isaac Nathan, the author of the first Hebrew concordance, was born cannot now be ascertained. He composed this gigantic work between the year 1437 and 1445; the *editio princeps* referred to by Jacob b. Chajim appeared in 1523.

some forty years ago, and which was published in our printing-office at Venice, I could not have corrected the verses. This is a precious work; it embraces all the points of the Holy Bible, and explains all the sacred Scriptures by stating all nouns and verbs with their analogous forms, and giving at the heading of every noun and verb an explanation, saying the meaning of the word is so and so, or branches out in such and such a manner, and comments upon each one separately. It also marks the division of each chapter, and the number of chapters in every prophetic book, and tells in which chapter and verse every word occurs, *i. e.*, verse 4, 20, or 30, thereby any word wanted may easily be found. And if a verse has four or five verbs or nouns, *e. g.*, וּבִצֵּל יָדַי כְּסִיתִיךָ, you will find it quoted under צֵל, under יָד, and under כֶּסֶה, so that if you only remember one word of the verse, whether a verb or noun, you will easily find the required passage under the root of the verb or noun. The advantage to be derived from this book is indescribable; without it there is no way of examining the references of the Massora, since one who studies the Massora must look into the verse which the Massora quotes, and which without a concordance would take a very long time to find, as you might not know in which prophet the passage referred to occurs, and if you knew the prophet, you might still not know the chapter and verse. Besides, all the world is not so learned in the Scriptures. Whosoever has this concordance does not require any more the lexicon of Kimchi, for it contains all the roots, whereunto is added an index of all the verses in the Bible: none of them is wanted. In conclusion, without it I could not have done the work which I have done.

XLIX. Seeing that the Massora was too large to be printed entire in the margin, I have not repeated the Massoretic remark after it has been given once. Thus, for instance, וַיִּשְׁלַח occurs twenty-two times: I enumerated the passages in the remark on the words וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת הַיּוֹנָה [Gen. viii. 8], and when I afterwards came again to the word וַיִּשְׁלַח, in another place, I did not repeat all these references, having given them once before, but simply said the Massoretic remark will be found in section נח.^g As the prophetic books are large, every prophet having on an average twenty-five chapters, my labour would have been in vain if I had simply said the word is found in such and such a

^g נח is the title of one of the Sabbathic lessons comprising Gen. vi. 9—xi. 33; *vide supra*, § XV., p. 6.

prophet, since the reference could not be found without great exertion, and the student would soon have grown weary and left it off altogether. I have, therefore, adopted the division of the chapters which R. Isaac Nathan made, and said it occurs in such and such a prophet and in such and such a verse. Had I at that time the Massoretic division of the chapters on the whole Bible I would have preferred it, but I did not get it till I had almost finished the work. I have, nevertheless, published it separately, so that it may not be lost to Israel.

L. To make the Massora perfect I was obliged to re-arrange and correct the larger Massora, for it was impossible to print it in the margin of the Bible, and I have therein adopted the alphabetical order of *the Aruch*, to facilitate the reader. Moreover, all that we have printed of the larger Massora in the margin of the Bible, I have also repeated a second time in the great Massora, which I arranged alphabetically according to the example of *the Aruch*, but did not give it again entire; I have only repeated the beginning of the remarks. Thus, for instance, I said, “וּיֵשֶׁב טוֹ”, the word וּיֵשֶׁב, occurs fifteen times, as you will find in such and such a prophet and passage;” the same is the case with other observations which I have omitted, and this I have done designedly. Let an illustration suffice. If the student will examine a page of a prophetic or any other book of the Bible, he will find that it has generally ten or eleven verses; that there is not a verse which is without a Massoretic remark on a word or more, and that the smaller Massora notes every word upon which there is any Massora, and says it occurs four, thirteen, or fifteen times; and that it was impossible to print the whole Massora which belongs to that page; hence, when there are ten words on it which belongs to the Massora, I only give four or five at most, as the space of the page does not admit of more. Now the student not knowing whether it is given in another place, or where to look for it, might think that this Bible has not all the Massora which belongs to it. I have, therefore, been obliged to indicate in the root of the word in the great Massora in what part it is printed in such and such a prophet, and with what sign. I have also been obliged to repeat and state in the larger Massora many of the Massoretic remarks which the former editors have omitted in many places, because the page happened to be just as large as was required for printing the other matter. You, therefore, find it many a time stated in the margin of the Bible נִמְסַר בְּמַס’ רֵבְתָּא, *the Massora on this passage is in the great Massora*. Wherever also the Massoretic remarks belonging to a certain page were so large as to render

it impossible to give them in their proper place, which was too narrow, or wherever there were the alphabetic remarks of the great Massora which belonged to the same page, I always noted in the margin, "*this is one of such and such an alphabet, and is noted in the great Massora under such and such a letter,*" so that the student may easily find it. And you must not be astonished to find in the Massora such language as, "it is noted in *second* or *first* Samuel, or *second* Kings, or *second* Chronicles," or to see Ezra and Nehemiah separated; for the author of the concordance who divided the law, prophets, and hagiographa, into chapters, also divided Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles respectively into two books, and denominated Ezra the first ten chapters of the book, and the rest of the book he called Nehemiah; and as I have adopted the division of the concordance, I thought it advisable to append to the end of this introduction a list of all the chapters, with the words with which they begin and of their number in each book; so that if there crept in any mistakes in printing, they may easily be rectified by this list printed at the end of the introduction. We have printed in this Bible the number of every chapter in order that the student may easily find the passage when the Massora says, "*It is noted in such a chapter.*"

LI. Behold, I have exerted all my might and strength to collate and arrange the Massora with all the possible improvements, in order that it may remain pure and bright, and shew its beauty to the nations and princes, for, indeed, it is beautiful to look at. This was a labour of love for the benefit of our brethren, the children of Israel, and for the glory of our holy and perfect law, as well as to fulfil as far as possible the desire of Mr. Daniel Bomberg, whose expenses in this matter far exceeded my labours. And as regards the commentaries, I have exerted my powers to the utmost degree to correct in them all the mistakes as far as possible; and whatsoever my humble endeavours could accomplish was done for the glory of the Lord, and for the benefit of our people; and I would not be deterred by the enormous labour, for which cause I did not suffer my eyelids to be closed long, either in the winter or summer, and did not mind rising in the cold of the night, as my aim and desire were to see this holy work finished. Now praised be the Creator who granted me the privilege to begin and finish this work. Remember me, oh my God, for good!



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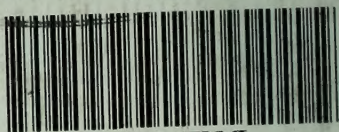
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